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RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LUSAKA 000653

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/S, DS/IP/AF, CA/OCS, M/MED AND
DS/DSS/OSAC
PRETORIA FOR HQ REGION SIX, MCESG; CDC FOR H1N1
INFLUENZA

PROGRAM

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [AMGT](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KSAF](#) [KSEO](#) [KPAO](#)
ZA
SUBJECT: H1N1 SPREADING IN ZAMBIA: GRZ AND MISSION
RESPONSES

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Pandemic H1N1 influenza is now estimated to be widespread in Zambia, with at least 300 clinical cases and 32 confirmed cases. Local authorities in Copperbelt and Central Province have closed some schools and quarantined students. Embassy Lusaka convened an interagency Pandemic Diseases Working Group meeting focused on H1N1 September 22, 2009 to coordinate information sharing and help ensure preparedness. End summary.

H1N1 HITS ZAMBIA Q GRZ STEPS UP CAMPAIGN

¶2. (SBU) The GRZ has stepped up its public awareness, testing and preventive measures in the face of a likely widespread outbreak of H1N1 pandemic flu in Zambia. The GRZ has confirmed 32 cases of H1N1 infection in patients from several provinces in Zambia. It is estimated that there have been at least 300 clinical cases thus far.

(SBU) Preparedness: The National Infectious Diseases Task Force meets biweekly to monitor the pandemic and adjust its response accordingly (one to two USG staff participate regularly). The National Influenza Pandemic Response Plan and H1N1 Clinical Guidelines were recently revised to reflect the changing epidemiology of the current pandemic. Given the limited human and financial resources in Zambia the MoH is taking appropriate steps to respond to the pandemic.

¶3. (SBU) Testing: The Ministry of Health (MoH) is able to perform H1N1 real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing at University Teaching Hospital (UTH) utilizing equipment and reagents supplied by CDC. All provinces and districts were encouraged to send in specimens to UTH for testing (Note: technical constraints mean testing is not done in areas outside the capital. End note).

¶3. (SBU) The MoH has established two outpatient sentinel sites in local clinics in Lusaka as well as the Filter Clinic at UTH which provide patients for H1N1 testing. MoH also does active testing for H1N1 in UTH hospital admissions of all ages that have influenza-like illnesses.

¶4. (SBU) Equipment/Vaccine: Personal protective

equipment purchased by the WHO and CDC was sent to all provincial capitals. Zambia is expected to receive an undetermined amount of U.S. and vaccine manufacturer-donated H1N1 vaccine through the WHO.

14. (SBU) Airport Screening/Isolation Facilities: Staff at all major border posts and airports were sensitized to the pandemic and asked to identify and interview persons appearing ill arriving from other countries. Lusaka International Airport established a facility with 10 beds for use as needed by ill passengers. Also in Lusaka, authorities have designated an isolation facility at a local clinic to accommodate up to 15 patients if the need arises.

15. (SBU) Public Awareness: Community radio and television stations have been carrying public service announcements about the pandemic. Local press has picked up stories of school closings and health authority responses.

MISSION LUSAKA COORDINATES, PREPARES

16. (SBU) Mission Lusaka convened an H1N1-focused Pandemic Diseases Working Group meeting September 22, 2009 to coordinate interagency efforts and ensure better preparedness should pandemic disease tripwires be crossed. CONS, CDC, USAID, PAS, MGMT, RSO were present and MED, CLO, DAO were consulted.

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17. (SBU) The Working Group decided to review regularly pandemic disease tripwires, to meet monthly and to convene the EAC if warranted. In terms of Amcit outreach, the Working Group coordinated consular transmission of a warden message in light of increased press reports of school closures and quarantined students. CDC had also recently presented to the American International School community on H1N1 prevention steps.

18. (SBU) To enhance speed of access, CDC compiled a list of key GRZ contacts for pandemic disease response and distributed to all Working Group members. This contact list and other key information will appear on the Intellipedia-U site the Working Group is developing to facilitate the sharing of pandemic disease information across the interagency community in Zambia and the region. Public Affairs is adding an H1N1 link to the Embassy internet site to direct the public to CDC-sourced information.

19. (SBU) The U.S. Embassy Health Unit has 384 treatment courses of Tamiflu expiring 8/2010 and 372 courses expiring in 4/2014, as well as 27 Relenza inhalors for treating USG employees and dependents with severe influenza. RN Wendland has inquired about H1N1 vaccine and its projected availability for high-risk individuals. CDC regularly transmits electronic H1N1 influenza updates to the Mission community for use in outreach as appropriate.

BOOTH